Finding Randy

By Kay Savetz

I've done more than 200 interviews of people who worked with Atari 8-bit computers: folks who helped design them, build them, program them, and wrote magazines and books about them. (You can hear the interviews at AtariPodcast.com.) It has been an amazing experience for me, and an honor, to get to talk to the people who created my favorite computer and its ecosystem.

Before I can interview someone, I need to find them, of course. Sometimes, this takes just a few minutes. Other times, finding someone who worked on an Atari project 30-plus years ago takes more effort and patience. It took me nearly two years to find Randy Glover, creator of one of my very favorite games, Jumpman (released by Epyx in 1983.) He also created Jumpman Junior and contributed to Summer Games.

My searches start with basic Google-ing, and from the start Randy was frustratingly difficult to find. He used to have a web site, now gone. He is mentioned by several people who got permission from him over the years to create various Jumpman derivatives (such as the Kickstarted Jumpman Forever), but none of those people had current contact information for Randy. He was once scheduled to speak at a classic gaming conference, but had to cancel his appearance. The organizer of the conference told me that he since dropped off the face of the earth.

Randy wasn't trying to be difficult to find. He didn't know I was looking for him; I was looking in the wrong places. Like most other Atari people, he had simply moved on with his life, changing email addresses and web hosts, moving to new homes and new phone numbers over the years.

I did have some leads. I managed to talk on the phone to his brother, who said he would pass my message on to Randy. But the next time I called the brother, he was no longer at that phone number. I found a Randy Glover in the right part of the country, and called that number several times over the course of weeks, always getting an answering machine, before a patient woman told me that her husband was not the

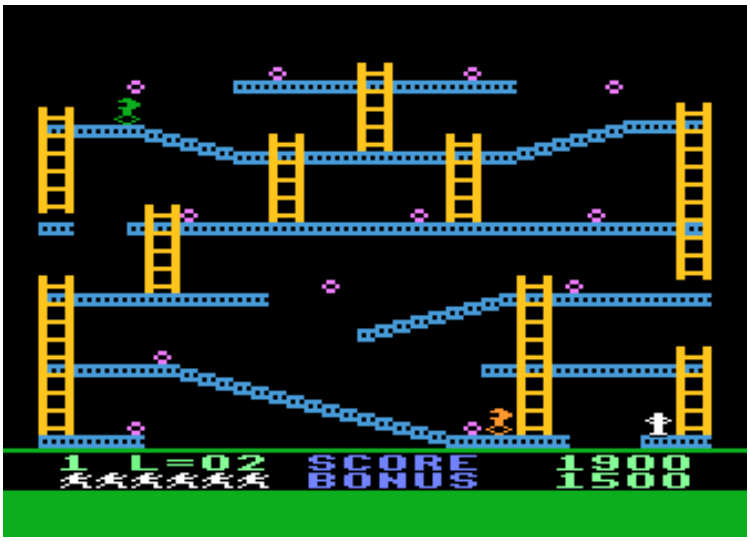
same Randy. I used an online phone book to send snail mail to Randy Glovers (or is the correct plural Randys Glover?) at different addresses. The letters either bounced back as undeliverable or went unanswered. Glover is a surprisingly common surname.

I log each letter, phone call, and e-mail attempt in a text file so that I remember which avenues I've tried to find people. If I printed out that file (which includes details for all the people I've found and searched in vain for) it would be 80 pages.

In my research, I read an article titled From Automated Simulations to Epyx at The Digital Antiquarian. It mentioned that at Epyx, hundreds of dollars changed hands weekly in epic games of poker. I didn't think much of it, until months later when I found a disused Twitter account associated with a defunct online poker game run by someone named Randy Glover. Could it be the same guy?

Although the poker site was gone, I found a phone number in whois records and called it. I had reached a company that builds electronic control systems for elevators. This did not seem promising. But, when I asked "Are you the Randy Glover who created Jumpman?", the voice on the other end said "Yes I am." My search of almost two years was over.

We did the interview a few days later, on May 7, 2016. Randy graciously shared his many memories of his Atari days, and I was delighted to be able to chat with the creator of one of the best games for the best computer. Here's the interview. At last.



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P.S. added in 2025. Six years after my interview, Randy gave a talk at the Sac Gamers Expo conference. You can watch that on YouTube or Internet Archive.